

A MIDSUMMER TRIP TO NICARAGUA

By JOHN S. KENDALL



New Orleans, La.
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1903

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A Midsummer Trip to Nicaragua.

Notes of a Voyage from New Orleans to Bluefields. Picturesque Places
Where the Tourist Finds Much to Enjoy.

Great Enterprises Under Way at Cape Gracias a Dios. Bluefields One of
the Coolest, Healthiest and Most Delightful Towns
in Central America.

I.

THE recent development of the fruit trade between New Orleans and Central America has led to the addition to the Bluefields Steamship Company's fleet of a number of handsomely equipped steamers, adapted to the needs of a rapidly expanding passenger business. Of these splendid ships the *Corinto* and the *Bluefields*, are admirable types. Though built and owned in Norway, they are designed expressly for service between New Orleans and Nicaragua, and embody all the best features of modern marine architecture. The *Bluefields*, for example, is a steel ship 224 feet long, of 1,601 tons burden, and is capable of making a speed of eleven knots per hour under ordinary circumstances. She has facilities for the safe and convenient transportation of 27,000 bunches of bananas, a cargo which can be considerably augmented whenever the necessity arises. There are accommodations for nineteen first-class passengers. Most of the staterooms are located on the main deck, opening into a large and well-ventilated dining saloon. They are fitted with all the conveniences ordinarily found on a transatlantic liner. The saloon is beautiful in white enameled wood-work and upholstered in "art nouveau" velvet, and is one of the most attractive places in the whole vessel. On the deck above are a smoking-room for men and a parlor for ladies, both apartments elaborately finished in mahogany and upholstered, the one in leather, the other in velvet. The ample deckroom permits the traveler to enjoy the delicious coolness of the ocean breezes, and everywhere are found comfortable steamer chairs in which to lie at

ease. The *Bluefields* is equipped with all the newest devices to promote safety and comfort, including the supplemental keels, which reduce the rolling of the vessel at sea. Most people are liable to seasickness, and it must always be the best of recommendations for a passenger ship to say that she is "steady as a house," a verdict which one has no hesitation in rendering in favor of the *Bluefields* after an experience which, like mine, extended over nearly fifteen days of travel and included just enough bad weather to adequately test the good ship's merit in this important regard.

It was our good fortune to make the trip from New Orleans to Bluefields on the fifth voyage of this splendid ship. We left New Orleans on July 15 and were safely back home again on Aug. 1. Ordinarily the vessels of the Bluefields Steamship Company make the trip in five or six days, the longer schedule including one day at Cape Gracias a Dios. At present there are no stops on the return trip, which is thus made in better time in order to avert any danger that might otherwise threaten the precious cargo of fruit neatly stored away 'tween decks. Thus the passenger gets from eleven to twelve days at sea, where he can inhale the salty and invigorating sea air, and enjoy the delicious idleness nowhere else obtainable in this whole busy world except on board ship. We left New Orleans about 11 o'clock in the morning, a gratifying circumstance, inasmuch as it brought us to the bar at the mouth of the river just at sunset. The trip down the river was full of interest. On either hand the verdant shore unrolled itself in a long panorama of green and fertile fields, interrupted here and there by the tall chimney of a sugar refinery

or the clustered roofs of a little village. At length we passed through the jetties and emerged upon the tranquil Gulf in the full glory of a matchless Louisiana sunset. As the coast line faded from view we found ourselves floating upon a sea bathed in the golden radiance of the declining day, every tiny wave gilded with the light of the setting sun. In the immense solemnity of the place and hour the reverberation of the good ship's screw made a sort of restless murmur that fitted into the poetry of the scene, and prepared us as by some subtle magic for the vast peace and solitude of days and days when we would not see any trace of land or of man's handiwork outside of our own stalwart ship.

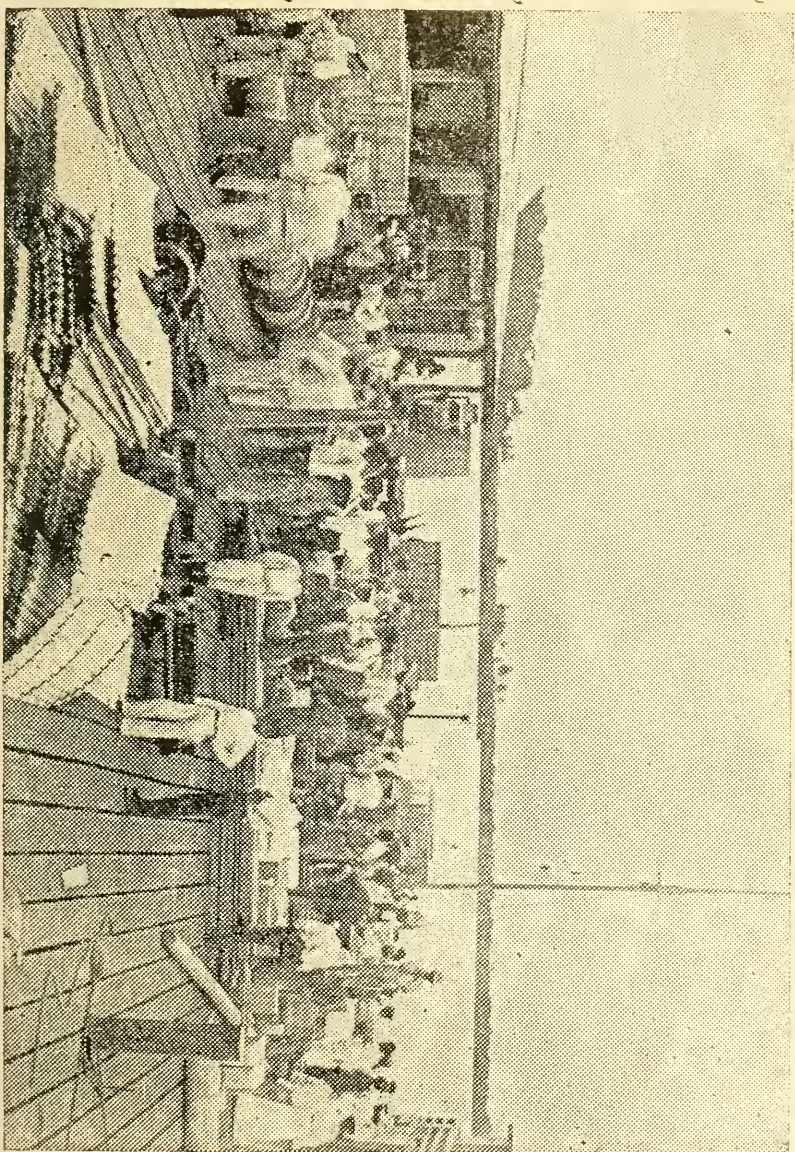
Our commander, Captain Hansen, proved himself a valuable addition to the merry party that assembled three times a day around the bountifully served dining tables of the Bluefields. A Norwegian by birth and by nationality, he has a good knowledge of the English tongue, and an experience of the sea which dates back to his early boyhood. For many years he has traded along the West Indian and the Central American coasts, and his knowledge of the local conditions in each of the many countries to which his vocation has called him at one time or another is as thorough as his command of his profession. Moreover, he is a well-read man, with a large fund of humor, and the unflinching cheerfulness that seems the attribute of all navigators in Central American waters. Captain Hansen was only temporarily in charge of the Bluefields, replacing Captain Halvorsen during the latter's illness in New Orleans; but having served some time as second in command on the ship, he brought adequate experience to the post, and acquitted himself very gracefully of a difficult and delicate task.

A congenial group of passengers made the voyage extremely pleasant. In the party were two young New Orleans men, who are now permanently identified with Nicaragua, and who have made more than ordinary success by dint of great personal capacity and extremely hard work. Mr. A. V. Beer, of the New Orleans and Central American Trading Company, proved to be a most interesting man. At the age of 27 he shares with his brother the active management of a very large and important general supply business, the headquarters of which are established in Bluefields, but the ramifications of which cover the adjacent coast very thoroughly. About ten years ago Mr. Beer went to Bluefields to join his father, whose energy and enterprise brought the business into being twenty-two

years ago, and under the paternal eye he was trained in every detail of the trade, from the hard work of the warehouse to the scarcely less onerous routine of the office and the counter. Every year he returned to the city to continue his studies at Tulane University, of which he is an alumnus, but after his graduation, three or four years ago, he cast his lot definitely in Nicaragua, where he is widely known and generally respected. The dogged courage and the splendid patience which make such a career possible are worthy of admiration, and indicate just the qualities that are requisite for success in Central America, where, while opportunities are abundant, ability and industry, honesty and sobriety, are essential to turn them to account.

Mr. Rene J. La Villebeuvre, another member of the party, was returning to his home in Managua, after a brief visit to the United States. Mr. La Villebeuvre came to Nicaragua nine years ago and found employment first in Bluefields, then in the mines on the upper courses of the Wanks River. He made an excellent reputation in both places, and won for himself an enviable circle of warm friends. Subsequently becoming connected with the Central American Commercial Company, a gigantic corporation which controls a large part of the public utilities of Nicaragua, he was placed in charge of the electric light plant in Managua, where he has since remained. Mr. La Villebeuvre is a practical electrician, with five years' experience in the shops in New Orleans. This knowledge of the business has stood him in good stead in a position the difficulties of which cannot well be imagined by people to whom the electric light is the commonplace of every day existence. Mr. La Villebeuvre is a careful, painstaking, conscientious man, highly esteemed by the Government officials in Nicaragua, where his sterling qualities are warmly appreciated.

One of the pleasant features of the voyage from New Orleans to Bluefields is the fact that there are many small interruptions in the long monotony of sea and sky. The Gulf of Mexico is one of the busiest of the great marine subdivisions, and nearly every day reveals somewhere along the horizon line the smoke of a far-off steamer or the tapering spars and snowy sails of a full-rigged vessel. On the evening of the second day out we passed the western end of Cuba, known as Cape San Antonio—a low-lying point of land, dotted with straggling palm trees and terminating in a tall white lighthouse. Twenty-four hours later the Bluefields passed within a mile of



Scene on the Custom-house Wharf, Bluefields.

Swan Island, a tiny little speck of land lying, like a derelict, in mid-ocean, yet with a population of twenty-five or thirty souls. Formerly Swan Island was the scene of considerable activity, but the guano deposits are not now being worked, and the only traffic is in cocoanuts. The island is the property of a Boston company, and really, if not legally, is an outpost of the United States, the flag of which nation the islanders proudly display whenever a vessel passes near. We did not get much of a chance to view the place, but from the distance it seemed very beautiful, thickly set with lofty trees and washed by green water and sparkling surf.

A little after daybreak on Wednesday morning the Bluefields found herself approaching Cape Gracias a Dios, the forest-clad promontory where the Wanks River pours its muddy waters into the Carribean and divides Honduras from Nicaragua. Cape Gracias owes its name to Columbus, who stopped here on his way northward toward Truxillo, on one of his latter voyages. Up to within a few months the steamers which called at the cape anchored off the little town which bears the same name, situated at the former mouth of the Wanks River, five miles from its present mouth. Fifty years ago the town was of considerable size, and the harbor so deep and spacious that the ships of many nations and of any draught found convenient anchorage close inshore. The Wanks, however, proved treacherous. The silt it brought down from the interior gradually filled the harbor and drove the shipping to anchorages further and further from shore, so that today there is hardly water enough to float a small sailboat where formerly men-of-war were accustomed to ride. Early in the present year the port of entry was transferred to the town of Port Dietrick, which is in course of construction at the new mouth of the Wanks, and this change practically completed the ruin of the older settlement. With the Government offices went almost all the white population, so that the residents of Gracias nowadays are Indians only, and do not number more than a few hundreds.

Port Dietrick, in spite of its excessive newness, is one of the most interesting places in Central America. For one thing, it is an American enterprise, named after an American, and largely built, or building, with American money. An enterprising American, who is said to be backed by Senator Clark, of Montana, and other wealthy men, has secured a concession for the exploitation of several enterprises in north-eastern Nicaragua, including mines, cattle, etc. In part payment for his

extensive privileges he is under obligation to improve the navigation of the Wanks River, a tortuous and turbulent stream, broken by numerous waterfalls and obstructed by mighty rocks. But the Wanks leads to the rich gold mines of the interior, and is one of the chief routes by which provisions are conveyed thither and the bullion shipped down to the sea. There are, then, good reasons why a town should exist at the mouth of this picturesque stream. Port Dietrick has already a population of 400, of whom twenty are Americans. The Government has erected a commodious custom-house; a hotel to cost \$40,000 is now nearing completion, and a channel is to be excavated from the present anchorage in such a way that vessels will be able to lie practically alongside the custom-house wharf. Pending the completion of the last-mentioned improvement, the Bluefields was obliged to anchor about a mile from the shore, but in a sheltered position. The natives, in "dories," as their long, narrow boats, hewn out of single mahogany logs, are termed, received the freight in their little vessels and conveyed it safely ashore.

Port Dietrick is, in fact, a noted center of the Indian population of the northern part of the Mosquito Territory. The Indians are a most interesting race. They make their homes along the rivers in the interior, but as their livelihood is earned by working along the coasts they have many temporary settlements there, one of which is included in the town of Port Dietrick. They have the reputation of being incurable petty thieves, and we were cautioned to keep the ports in our staterooms closed while the Bluefields lay in harbor, lest they should secure admission by these openings and rifle our property. It appears, however, that they are dishonest only with respect to trifles. The theft of large articles or of important sums of money is very rare. The Indians who came under our observation during our brief stay at the Cape were evidently of mixed race; and, in fact, the Jamaican negroes and the so-called Caribs are found scattered along the coast, working alongside of the natives, and probably affiliating with them socially. The Caribs are of somewhat superior mental abilities, inasmuch as many of the Indian boat crews are found under the leadership of one of these coal-black individuals. As boatmen, the Caribs and the Indians are wonderfully expert. Among the dories which flocked around the Bluefields were many in which twelve or fourteen men found room, one to steer at each end, and the rest to paddle, and so skillful were they all that even when their little vessel was laden al-

most to the water's edge they navigated it successfully to land in spite of the mighty surge of the Caribbean perpetually rolling upon the bar. Almost amphibious by habit, these intrepid boatmen venture out in almost all weathers, inviting risks which would appal other people.

One amusing peculiarity exhibited by our Indian visitors was a method of cutting the hair which left a sort of thick thatch upon the top of the skull, but denuded the lower portion of the head of its legitimate adornment. This is accomplished by placing a gourd upon the victim's head and trimming away all the hair which projects below its somewhat restricted margins. Some of the natives had the further peculiarity—not uncommon, it appears, but quite devoid of offense—of a mild leprosy, which mottles the dusky skin with curious patches of white. This disease is strictly hereditary, and does not seem to cause the sufferer either pain or inconvenience; nevertheless, its effect upon the cuticle is abnormal and unattractive.

The Bluefields carried quite a quantity of lumber and machinery for Port Dietrick. We did not take any cargo from the place, though I understand considerable quantities of timber and cattle are exported annually, in addition to the gold of the interior. Among our passengers was a Mr. Duran, a Cuban cattle dealer, who left us at Port Dietrick to complete arrangements for a shipment of beeves, a sort of experimental transaction, which, if successful, will no doubt initiate a profitable business. There appears to be a demand for the Nicaraguan cattle to be fattened in the rich pastures of Pinar del Rio and eventually consigned to the abattoirs in Havana. All of this, however, is a matter of the future. Port Dietrick is not more than seven months old, and there is much to do there yet before a large city is called into existence, with its attendant commercial and mercantile enterprises.

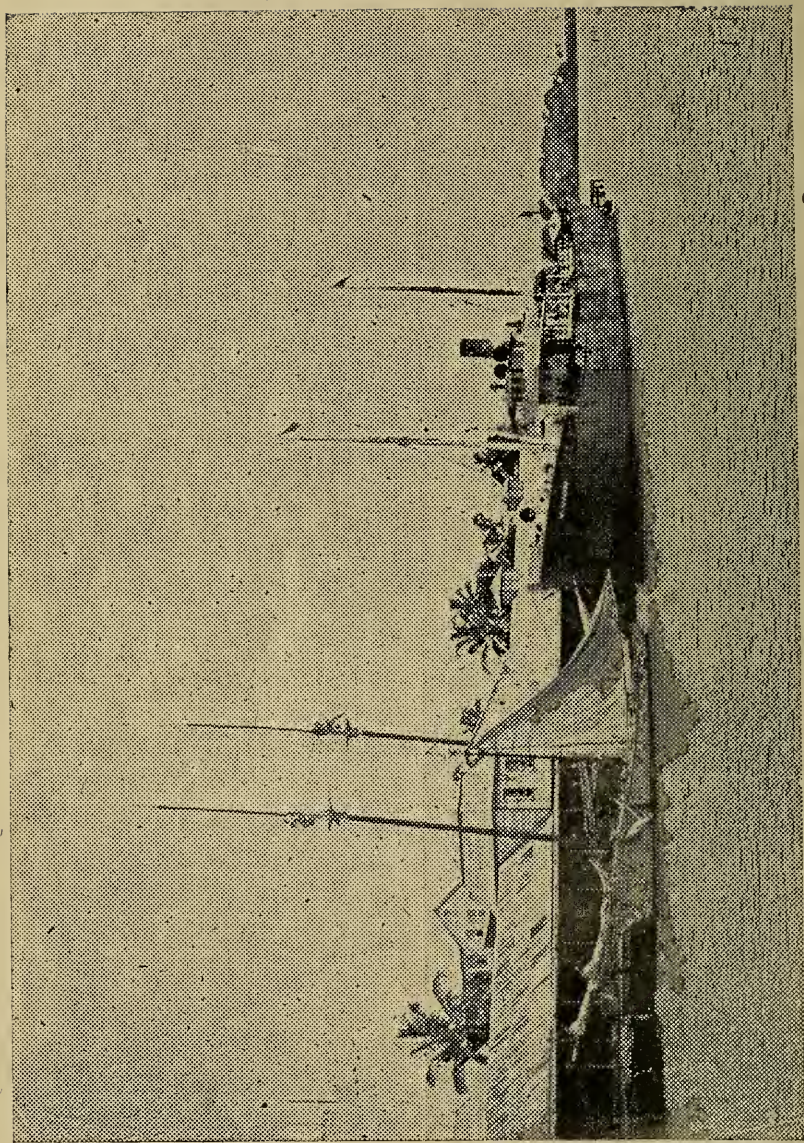
It is only a matter of twenty-four hours from Port Dietrick to Bluefields. On Friday morning we found our good ship steaming into a superb lagoon, following a channel that wound in and around a succession of thickly-wooded keys, and finally brought us safely to anchor under the shadow of a bold headland known as The Bluff. The Bluff is seven miles distant from Bluefields, the roofs of which were distinguishable, glimmering in the morning sunshine, across the lagoon. It is, however, the point at which the commerce of the port is done. At the foot of the bluff an extensive wharf roofed with corrugated iron is provided for the reception and storage of freight. Ships of a certain draught can lie directly be-

side the wharf; but the Bluefields drew more than the available depth of water, and it was necessary for us to take passage in a sort of ferry-boat which transferred us thither in order to undergo the scrutiny of the Custom-house officials. These gentlemen are reputed locally to be very searching in their examinations, but I must say that the inquisition, insofar as our baggage was concerned, was accomplished with the minimum of inconvenience. This important matter attended to, we were directed back to our ferry-boat, which, in the course of an hour, delivered us at the wharf in Bluefields.

Bluefields, as I shall have occasion to point out more in detail in a subsequent letter, is a flourishing little town built of American lumber and corrugated iron. The lagoon of Bluefields is sheltered from the fury of storms, but open to the breezes of the ocean, facts which, conjoined with the heavy rainfall and excellent natural drainage, make it one of the coolest and healthiest places on the Central American coast. From the harbor the town presents an animated and attractive appearance. The ground rises from the water's edge in a series of gentle elevations, culminating within a mile or two in the heavy forests which clothe all the interior of Nicaragua. Along the hillside the streets of the little city are arranged in a picturesque way, with the vivid green of bread-fruit trees, palms and almonds to relieve the gray uniformity of metal roofs. Without doubt Bluefields is destined to be one of the greatest ports in Central America. A time will also come when its charm and beauty will attract scores of travelers, where one nowadays finds his way to its hospitable doors. The delicious purity of the atmosphere, the intense azure of its skies, the invigorating trade winds which blow perpetually, are all elements which render a visit to the little city a matter of genuine pleasure. Now that the enterprise of the Bluefields Steamship Company has provided the facilities for reaching the place in comfort and even in luxury, the tide of travel must inevitably set thither in constantly augmenting volume.

II.

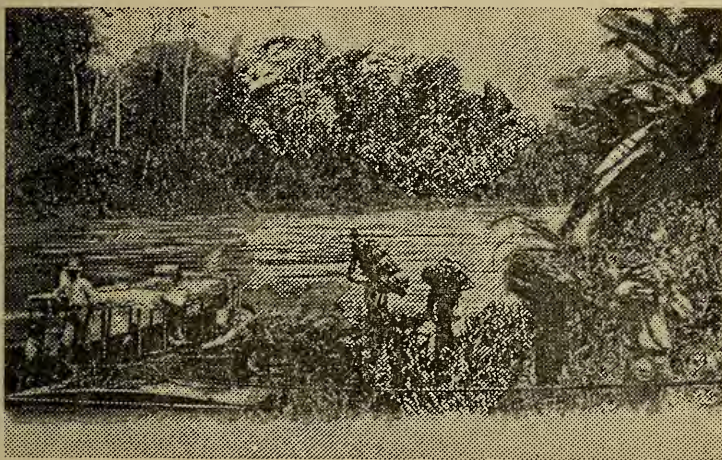
BLUEFIELDS, Republic of Nicaragua, Aug. 12.—The long stretch of rocky coast which borders the Caribbean, from Panama to Cape Gracias a Dios, and which, under the name of the Spanish Main, figures prominently in the early history of the continent, is not now the great center of maritime enterprise which it once was. Columbus, adventuring northward along an



Steamer Discharging Cargo at the Bluff, Bluefields.

unknown shore as far as the cape, set an example which was followed by Morgan, Drake and Nelson, by Walker and Gregg, and by many another valiant sailor and soldier beside. There exist few memorials of Columbus or Drake now; Morgan is scarcely a name; but some of Nelson's rusty cannon have been discovered on the Nicaraguan coast and Walker's incursion is still fresh in the minds of the people he once ruled. A hundred years ago when Spain was mistress of Latin America, a lucrative commerce existed in the precious metals; fleets of treasure-ships gathered at Panama to bear home the ingots collected from Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras, and the cheerful pirates from Tortuga, Old Providence and a dozen other

naturally converges towards it, while the banana plantations along the Escondido River, which discharges into the Bluefields lagoon a few miles from the town, invite American enterprise and capital. There is probably no place in Latin America, north of Panama, which offers more opportunities for investment. The mines are not far distant, the vast mahogany forests are now being opened up, every kind of agricultural, industrial and manufacturing enterprise can count on a fair chance of success. Bluefields must also appeal to the tourist as the handsomest, most convenient and healthiest of the coast towns in Central America. The comfortable steamers which connect the town with New Orleans suggest the trip as an ideal way of spending



Cutting Bananas on the Escondido River, Near Bluefields.

near-by islands maintained an illegal navy, which subsisted upon the Catholic King's costly galleons. Now, a new civilization is developing the resources of the Spanish Main, and fleets are again gathering at Puerto Cortez, Cape Gracias, Bluefields and Limon; but they are the peaceful vessels of the United Fruit Company, the Bluefields Steamship Company and other companies engaged in the banana business or the passenger trade, and if there are no pirates today to add romance to the voyage it is not without interest of its own.

Bluefields, with the noblest harbor on the Spanish Main, is without doubt destined to be a great commercial city. Situated almost exactly in the center of the east coast of Nicaragua, the trade from the interior

a two weeks' vacation. The notion that it is hot in the summer time is erroneous. The temperature never rises above 88 degrees and never falls below 68. Bluefields faces the trade winds, which blow without ceasing. Sweeping across the wide waters of the sea, they bring to the land a delicious freshness and coolness, so that all the year round one may sit on the verandas with which every dwelling is provided and luxuriate in the perfect comfort they provide. At night the temperature falls low enough to make a light blanket a desirable covering. Rains fall nearly every day, except in the spring; in the wet season the showers occur several times a day, and occasionally two or three days of deluge cleanses the city and stimu-

lates the already luxuriant vegetation.

The town is built upon the side of a low hill, back of which the land continues to rise in elevations of increasing height till lost in the thick forest of the interior. The situation facilitates drainage, an important matter where the rainfall at the present season of the year may amount to six or seven inches a day. The architecture assimilates as nearly as local conditions admit to the familiar American types. Instead of the tile and adobe of the typical Spanish town, Bluefields favors American lumber and corrugated zinc. The blank walls, barred windows, flat roofs and flowering courtyards of the hinterland give place to irregular lines of tiny cottages, some of which are set in the midst of small gardens, and all of which are picturesquely placed against a background of palm, mango and bread fruit trees. The clay found in the vicinity is unsuited for the manufacture of brick or tile, and the foreign element in the population adheres to the building methods with which it is familiar. But as duties are imposed according to weight, manifestly only the lighter kinds of material are imported, and the use of zinc for roofing in lieu of slate is thus accounted for. The result is by no means unpleasing. One is most impressed by the tiny size of the dwellings, in which two or three unceiled rooms suffice for the accommodation of the average family. There are several large general stores, the owners of which occupy residences of some size and elegance, but the most sumptuous of them cost less than \$4,500 to erect, and could be duplicated in Louisiana for half the money. A tiny cottage of two apartments costs \$700 to build; the average dwelling rents for \$25 per month or more, and there is a constant demand for property for both purposes. In fact, the buildings erected since the last fire, by which, about three years ago, nearly the whole town was consumed, are larger and handsomer than those they replace.

Housekeeping in Bluefields is not without its problems. Aside from the high rents, the absence of the usual sources of supplies compels the population to rely largely upon New Orleans for food. There is an interesting market housed in a handsome frame building overlooking the lagoon, and a good grade of meat can be purchased there at about 18 cents per pound. But fruits and vegetables are not easily obtained. Eggs sell readily at 63 cents per dozen, but chickens do not thrive, and the supply is not equal to the demand. The army ant is said to be particularly skilled in locating and consuming the newly-planted seeds, so that vegeta-

ble gardens do not flourish to any extent. Bananas are cut green and sold to the Fruit Company for export, so that one rarely sees them eaten in Bluefields. The tamarind, a nut with an acid but agreeable flavor; the zapote, a heart-shaped fruit with the flavor of baked sweet potatoes; the cocoanut, too common to be much valued; the guava, when in season, are a few of the native fruits which grow without cultivation. The bread fruit, which is much eaten, especially by the poor, is sliced and fried; only rarely do the natives allow it to become ripe enough to eat raw. Fish, oysters, crabs and turtle can be procured, when the boatmen develop enterprise enough to go after them, and furnish delicious eating. The natives cook fish with green bananas and eat the mixture with tortillas, a species of flapjack made of corn meal and roasted over the coals. But the main reliance of all classes is the American canned goods, which are imported in great quantities, and considering the freights, duties, etc., are sold at very reasonable prices.

Of society as such, Bluefields possesses little or nothing. The Americans, as one of them happily phrased it, consider themselves exiles, and, therefore, bound to stand together. They visit among themselves, and the International Club, which occupies a large, low, two-storied building on the principal street, has a membership of fifty, and is very popular. Here the foreigners assemble nearly every evening to enjoy the breezes on the spacious porch or to look over the books and papers with which the reading-room is provided, or to play cards "for drinks." "For drinks" is permitted, but other stakes are illegal, infringing upon the gambling concession, a monopoly which no one grudges its holder. Some beautiful examples of the spirit of brotherhood which links the Americans together in Bluefields are known. Young men who have landed here penniless, hoping to win fortune by "nerve" and luck, have been quietly cared for till they found employment, often for five or six months at a time. They say that no young man who is able and willing to work has gone wrong through any lack of assistance and advice on the part of his compatriots in Bluefields. "We feel," said a well-known merchant to me, "that the prosperity and reputation of each individual white man is the prosperity and reputation of all."

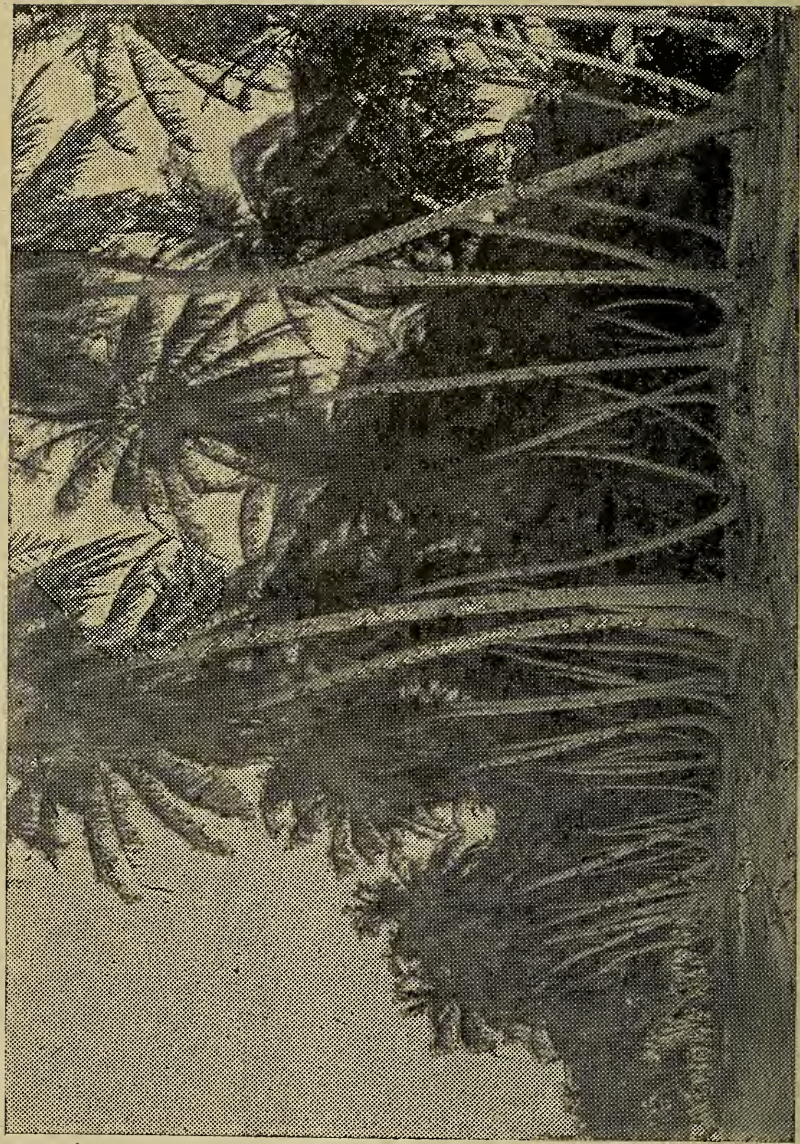
There are occasional dances at the Club to provide entertainment. The visit of an American warship is always an occasion for much dining and dancing. Sometimes Governor Estrada celebrates a birthday with a reception and concert at the Fed-

eral building. But the chief social events of the week are the concerts on Thursday and Sunday evenings at the botanical garden. Situated on the outskirts of the town, in front of a really handsome school for boys, the garden occupies an entire square, and is filled with a remarkable collection of shrubs. The hibiscus here grows to the dimensions of a large tree; there are bushes the leaves of which glow like a painter's palate; colias mottled with crimson, gold and blue; cacti of unusual size and queer shapes; mimosas tall and stately, and hundreds of plants of name unknown, but of an Oriental gorgeousness of foliage. In the center, an iron kiosk offers a retreat to the military band, which plays with taste and feeling the waltzes and romances of ten years ago. A circle of white-washed benches accommodates the crowd—white and black—for here the color line is hardly drawn—all as gayly dressed as the sumptuous vegetation surrounding them. Some of the toilettes of the colored belles are remarkable. Sky-blue skirts, with green blouses, richly trimmed with white embroidery and cotton lace; purple skirts, with broad splashes of black velvet sewn haphazard upon them; picture hats, with long ostrich plumes pointing straight out in every direction—these are some of the effects which may be noted in the course of a casual inspection. But the loudness of the ladies' apparel is the one aggressive feature of the entertainment, which really is far more dignified and enjoyable than a popular concert could possibly be in our own more boisterous country.

Society of a kind, however, there is among the colored people. They, too, support a club, larger and richer than the International. But that is only for an elect hundred or so. Many of the Bluefields blacks are employed as clerks in the stores, and are said to be faithful, competent, admirable penmen and good accountants. Others are in Government employ; many run little businesses of their own; a larger number find work on the docks, and the rest gain a livelihood by cutting bananas along the Escondido. The fruitships enlist a couple of hundred blacks at Bluefields, carry them to the scene of operations, and when the cargo is aboard convey them back to town. The numerous saloons garner no small part of their earnings. A very characteristic experience it is to see the colored population of Bluefields going to church on Sunday. The Moravian missionaries, who have for years labored with excellent results among the people of the coast, maintain a large establishment here, consisting of a handsome wooden church, a two-story dwelling where the dozen

whites connected with the mission are lodged, and two stores that do a thriving business. There is a colored preacher, recently ordained, and nearly all the church members are negroes. They are faithful attendants and always wear their best at the four or five services celebrated on Sunday. The men—such as can muster the garments—turn out in old dress suits, with straw hats and white gloves. The women belong to different church societies, and garb themselves accordingly. At a certain age they are admitted to the Daughters of the King, and wear bright purple skirts and white shirt waists. When they are a little older they enter another organization, and wear white from head to foot. It is all very picturesque, and not nearly so ridiculous as it may sound. In fact, the Bluefields negroes furnish much food for thought. They are clearly of a grade superior to our "corn field" darky, far more self-respecting, industrious and thrifty. They furnish only a small part of the criminal class, which in Bluefields is very small anyway. Drunkenness, small thefts, occasional fighting are the offenses of which they are oftenest guilty. The darker tragedies which stir the righteous indignation of the Southerners against the negro rarely or never occur. Crimes of violence are not unknown in Bluefields, but they are, as a rule, perpetrated by Indians and Spanish. I may mention in passing that at the present time there are nine murderers in duress, who are constantly seen working about the streets, guarded each by two soldiers. The death penalty does not exist in Nicaragua, and sentences of fifteen or twenty years are usually inflicted for homicides.

There are quite a number of Louisianians in Bluefields, among them Dr. T. B. Layton, of the Marine Hospital Service, and Dr. Braud, of the State Board of Health. Dr. Layton is one of the most delightful acquaintances one could desire to have. Being graduated at Tulane five years ago, he took service under the British Government and saw two years' experience on the transports conveying troops to South Africa. His adventures would occupy a profitable volume. He has spent some time in Central America, not only at Bluefields, but in Honduras and Costa Rica. His popularity with the American colony in Bluefields is deservedly great. Dr. Braud is from Donaldsonville, and is a capable and efficient official. The courtesy of these young men to the transient visitor is unfailing, and goes far to prejudice one in favor of the place. Other Louisianians who are prominent in Bluefields are Messrs. A. V. and Joseph Beer, the resident managers of the



Nicaragua's Stately Coconut Palms.

New Orleans and Central American Trading Company. Mr. Hulse, of the local steamship office, hails from Lafayette, and is a brother of Miss Victoria Hulse, a well-known member of the Faculty of the New Orleans Normal School. Solomon Weil, a well-known merchant, who has resided here for many years, comes from New Orleans, as does his nephew, Mr. J. M. Cohn. H. J. Shields, Cashier of the Bluefields Banana Company, is another Louisianian. J. S. Lampton, formerly of Bluefields, but now of Prinzpulca, and T. M. Solomon, formerly of Bluefields, but now of Managua, are both Louisianians. Mr. Solomon has large lumber interests in Bluefields still, but has just parted with his warehouse concession here, returning it to the Government in

century ago, to the hardy followers of the Black Flag. True, the Spanish treasure ships which attracted the enterprise of Drake, Olonnois, Pierre Legrand and other Brothers of the Coast, had then passed away. But a lucrative traffic still flourished along the Central American coast, and on this the pirates preyed. A Spanish lady, whom we met in Bluefields, told us that her great-grandfather perished while defending the ship he commanded from pirates, and people who knew the late Mr. Hudson, who died a few years ago in Bluefields, at the patriarchal age of 102, recall many interesting stories of the pirates which he used to relate as one having personal experience of them. At any rate, The Bluff, which as a settlement, considerably ante-



View of Bluefields From the Governor's Palace.

return for an equivalent of \$500,000 in gold. Other New Orleans people now resident here include Messrs. Harter, Wright, Ducros and Frank.

III.

BLUEFIELDS, Nicaragua, Aug. 19.—The early history of Bluefields is lost in obscurity. A local tradition attributes the name to a pirate named Blewfeltd, who used to careen his vessels in the lagoon off The Bluff. Blewfeltd flourished in the age of Sir Henry Morgan, when piracy, as a fine art, attained its fullest development in the Caribbean. Pirates frequented the Spanish main down to a comparatively recent period. Catalina Island, only a hundred miles or so from Bluefields, was one of their strongholds. There were ample inducements, a

dates Bluefields, is full of tales of buried treasures accidentally unearthed. One morning, in the '30s, a German leaning out of his bedroom window, saw something shining in the grass of his garden. He investigated; it proved to be the top of a long-interred earthenware jar full of Spanish doubloons. Only a few years ago a young American, digging in his garden, found a deposit of old pots, but they were empty—some luckier man had preceded him. There are still rumors of an inscribed rock which gives a clew to treasures galore, but nobody is looking for it now. Bluefields cherishes no such wild old tales of pirate gold. If any buried their spoils on the mainland, the secret remains unrevealed.

It was in 1812 that the British erected forts at The Bluff and Bluefields, neither of which survives. At

that date Bluefields was a little settlement of Mosquitos Indians. It remained unchanged for sixty or seventy years. The Mosquitos recognized the authority of a chief to whom the politic English accorded the title of King. Whenever a new monarch succeeded to the throne, he was taken to Belize and there solemnly crowned. In a curious volume, "Waikna," by Baird, an American traveler, who visited Bluefields in 1855, there is a description of the Mosquito settlement as it then was. An Englishman named Greene was nominally acting as tutor to the heir apparent, really as the British Viceroy. At the end of a week Baird expressed a desire to see the young Prince, and great was his surprise when, turning to the barefoot waiter who served the matutinal coffee, Greene introduced this ragged servant as the future King. In fact the Mosquito monarchy was a farce. The King was surrounded by a court much better supplied with titles than with clothes. A strapping native, wearing a loin-cloth and an old military coat, was the Lord Nelson Napoleon Bonaparte. Another who possessed a part of a naval uniform was known as the Admiral Smart. The other features of the monarchy were equally ridiculous. Nicaragua encroached more or less upon the Mosquito kingdom during the early part of the last century. In 1862 the treaty of Managua, to which the United States consented, assured to the Indians the possession of the disputed territory. But it soon became evident that Bluefields was essential to the development of the Republic. The imperial impulse, when once felt, is not to be confined by treaties, however numerous the signatories. So, in 1894, the Nicaragua Government marched troops into the Mosquito territory, upset the monarchy, and formally annexed what had practically long been a part of the Republic. Since then, the Indians have been induced to participate in one or two conventions, where the new Government has been confirmed and the legitimist pretensions effectually outlawed. At present the town is included in the district of Zelaya, which has a population of about 4,000 souls, and is ruled by a Governor appointed by the President. General Juan Estrada, the present incumbent, is a man of more than average ability, very popular with all classes of the population. He is a handsome man of stalwart physique, a fine horseman, and a distinguished soldier. He is affable, approachable and keenly alive to the interests of his people, as is demonstrated by the fact that Bluefields is steadily improving in every direction. Good schools, a drain-

age system, and a handsome botanical garden where a military band plays twice a week, are some of many evidences of the fostering care of a wise and progressive administration. There is a municipal organization which supplements the local Federal establishment, and which is domiciled in an attractive little frame building near the park. It works in perfect harmony with the Governor, and deserves a share of the credit for the recent improvements which have been made in the city.

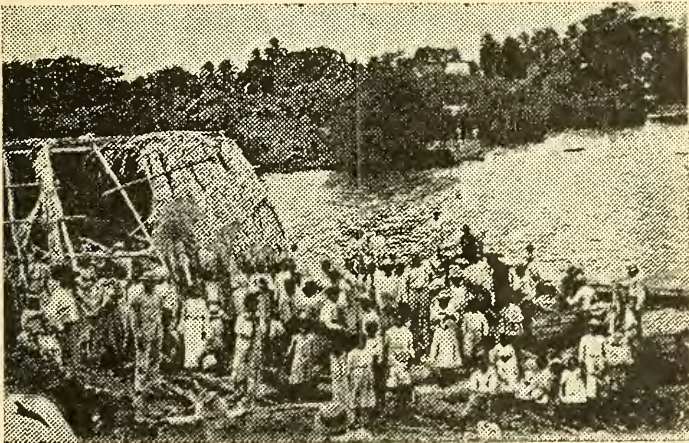
The population of Bluefields, the town, is about 2,500, representing a large number of nationalities. There are, of course, many Americans. I have met Canadians, English, Belgians, Germans, Australians, French, and Chinese. Doubtless other European nations are also represented more or less numerously. The bulk of the population is black. During the time when English influence was supreme, many negroes from Jamaica were settled in Bluefields, whose descendants continue to reside here. Mosquito Indians are numerous; Caribs, Caymen Islanders and blacks and half-breeds from all parts of Central America abound. But the prevailing tongue is English. The Nicaragua coinage is seen less frequently than American silver. In a handful of change one gets money from Hayti, Guatemala and Costa Rica, oftener than from Nicaragua. The only paper money in circulation is American. A good deal of confusion naturally arises from the differences in value in the various kinds of circulating media, but not so much as might be expected. The silver sol (dollar) is rated pretty uniformly at 42 cents, American, and business is done on that basis. It is estimated that business aggregating from \$4,500,000 to \$5,000,000 is annually transacted in Bluefields alone.

In fact, in proportion to its size, Bluefields is a very active commercial center. The American Consul, Mr. Clancy, estimates the value of the exports in 1904 at \$1,562,853.98, chiefly in bananas, rubber and gold. The figures for 1905 will probably show a handsome increase. The imports last year were valued at \$800,000, of which probably two-thirds represented merchandise purchased in the United States, chiefly in New Orleans. The rest came from Europe by way of New York and New Orleans. The entire import trade passes through New Orleans on its way to Bluefields. The Bluefields Steamship Company, which handles traffic, is a New Orleans firm, and appears to be keenly alive to the needs of the business. The management appears to realize that New Or-

leans is the center to which the trade of all this region naturally converges and is doing all in its power to direct it thither. There are, however, many impediments which, it is to be hoped, the New Orleans merchants will themselves remove, as they can do, if so disposed, and which are responsible for the fact that their share of the trade is not larger than it is. The Bluefields merchants roughly classify these under three heads, in which order I will, for convenience, discuss them here. At the present time New Orleans cannot sustain the comparison with Europe in respect to prices and the packing and billing of merchandise. Take the matter of hats. In Europe the package is first made up, and the box then built around it, in such a way that its contents are not crushed

assortment in the hope of gaining a good customer eventually. One large New Orleans manufacturer of shoes who does an immense business throughout Central America made a success by imitating the example of his European rivals. Four members of the firm at different times have visited Bluefields solely with a view to ascertain from the local merchants what their needs were. It is interesting to observe that the lasts in favor in Central America differ markedly from those popular in the United States. How absurd, then, must it seem, for drummers to solicit orders in Nicaragua who carry the same line of samples they would take to Florida or Arkansas!

A very serious factor which militates against New Orleans in this trade is the indifference of our mer-



Group of Natives at "Oldbank," Bluefields.

or damaged, and no waste space left. New Orleans—and the United States in general, for that matter—goes the other way about it. The shipment is often crushed out of shape in transit as a result. Moreover, a duty is exacted at Bluefields on the weight of a package as a whole. Every unnecessary ounce of wood in the packing-case means that much additional outlay in customs.

The European manufacturers are eager to make up small orders after a pattern furnished them by the Bluefields dealer, in the hope that the business will grow, and larger orders follow. But the American manufacturers are not willing to take the risk involved, and if they do not carry in stock precisely the article suited for the Nicaraguan trade, are averse to adding new styles to their

chants to the customs regulations in force at Bluefields. The law requires that the bills of lading should be written out in a certain form and contain certain information not usual in the United States. The lack of it entails a fine upon the merchant often amounting to 10 per cent of the value of the goods. An error in the weights occasions another fine of equal amount. Every article must be accurately described in certain prescribed terms, otherwise, further fines result. The New Orleans merchants are, with certain exceptions, very careless in attending to these details. The export houses in New York give the subject much attention, but they do not vie with the European exporter whose shipments are accompanied invariably by precisely the right kind of papers. Nor

is this all. The American merchant only occasionally condescends to employ the Spanish language; the European does so invariably. In Nicaragua, as in fact, throughout Latin-America, the greatest importance is attached to details even so small as a blot, the presence of which, on the manifest, may entail additional fines upon the consignee. It can be readily imagined, then, how far the slack methods of New Orleans merchants have retarded the development of her trade with Nicaragua.

Most of the merchants in Bluefields would prefer to deal with New Orleans, that city being nearer than any other American port; goods are therefore a shorter time in transit, and they are, therefore, under necessity of carrying smaller stocks. It takes four months to get a consignment from Europe, as against six days from New Orleans. But Europe meets this with prices which more than make up for the disadvantage in time. The Bluefields merchants find it cheaper in Europe to buy underwear, hosiery, ready-made clothing, fancy muslins, wines and liquors, not to mention embroideries, laces and other articles in which European supremacy is uncontested. New Orleans suffers from the further handicap that prices there, in certain lines, compare unfavorably with those in St. Louis and New York. This, for example, specially is true of hardware.

In addition to all these disadvantages, New Orleans has accumulated another one by ignoring the social side of business relations with Central American customers. There are important Bluefield merchants who deal largely with New Orleans houses who are personally unknown to every member of those firms, whose visits to New Orleans are ignored by them, and who never receive the courtesies that would lead them to believe that any value was attached to the connection. The North and West do not make this mistake. Does any New Orleans merchant advise his Bluefields correspondents when and where to make advantageous purchases in view of an anticipated rise in the market? Not many, if any. And yet there are St. Louis and New York merchants who think it well worth their while to do so.

The most serious charge which is brought against the New Orleans merchants is that practice which they persist in of substituting something else "just as good" for the articles ordered, whenever it suits their convenience to do so. The merchants in Bluefields complain bitterly of the impossibility of convincing the average New Orleans exporter that the conditions in Nicaragua are peculiar, and that merchandise must

be sent exactly as ordered in order to comply with the local conditions. They declare that the New York and St. Louis tradesmen never substitute; when the article ordered is not in stock, they made no shipment until they have ascertained whether something else will prove equally acceptable. They assert that the New Orleans merchant goes bravely ahead, pitting his conception of what Bluefields wants against the plain letter of the order, and that he is as likely to substitute ash hoe-handles where oak is ordered, or a No. 2 student's lamp, where a No. 1 is ordered, as not. Obviously, such a state of things militates very seriously against the growth of New Orleans' trade with Bluefields.

I have perhaps written strongly about these conditions. But it seems to me that the occasion warrants an energetic protest against the slack methods which are shutting away New Orleans people from their legitimate share of a profitable and increasing business. I have not had the time to go into the subject as fully as its importance warrants, but the foregoing hints are sufficient, if heeded, to rectify many abuses, and reassure exasperated customers that New Orleans is willing to do what is right. Otherwise, the trade which will continue to grow will fall more and more into the hands of New York and St. Louis, and to New Orleans will remain only such part of it as her geographical position assures, joined to the monopoly of the transportation.

IV.

THE impression of Nicaragua which one gets in the course of a voyage along the eastern coast gives little intimation of the rapid progress which is being made in almost every line of effort in the interior of the Republic.

Superficial observers who have visited the country have not hesitated to criticize much which a closer knowledge of the facts might have proven well worthy of praise. This remark applies with special emphasis to the attacks on President Zelaya and his Administration that have from time to time appeared in the American newspapers. The writers of these unfortunate screeds have proceeded on the assumption that whatever differed from the practices in vogue in the United States was necessarily wrong where it were not dishonest. But a little investigation shows how completely unfounded are both of these ideas. Nicaragua, in spite of the fact that its recorded history runs back for centuries, is really a new

land, now for the first time being exploited by capital and enterprise. Such a country, obviously, required the control of a strong and resourceful government, which will preserve the peace at all hazards and, having done that much, will offer great inducements to foreigners to bring their money and energy into the Republic. The means to be employed to effect these objects may invite criticism, but it will always be safe to assume that they are the best that could be devised to meet the emergency, and that better will be put in force as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

No one who visits the east coast of Nicaragua can fail to see that great progress has been made within the last few years, since President Zelaya came into power and established the strong Government which now maintains peace throughout the country. Peace is the great desideratum. So long as it is maintained, the prosperity of the Republic is bound to increase, no matter what errors of administration may seem at times to check its steady development. If, therefore, President Zelaya has done nothing else for his native land than to hold in check the forces which make for anarchy, he deserves well of his own people and merits the admiration of foreigners. But he has done more. He has made mistakes, undoubtedly—what public man has not?—but there are certain policies which he has laid down and partially carried out that, when all is said that adverse critics can say, will redound to the benefit of Nicaragua. He is developing the country's resources; he is building railroads; he is restoring the finances, and he is creating abroad a wholesome confidence in Nicaraguan securities. The way he has hit on to develop the resources of the country is to grant concessions; this method has been freely attacked, yet it is probably the only means by which foreign capital could be induced to come to Nicaragua quickly and in large amounts; and this being the object which the Administration and the people desire ardently, the method must be praised, for the results are being attained. It must be remembered, too, that the concession or monopoly is a recognized feature of Latin policy, from Mexico to Chili and the Argentine. The Latin American statesmen turn to it instinctively. In the United States a different custom and a different idea prevail; but because our conceptions of economics are at variance with those that maintain south of the Rio Grande, it does not necessarily follow that we are right. The principle of the concession has been successfully tested in many of the Central American coun-

tries; it is regarded as a legitimate way of accomplishing a worthy object, and the impartial observer must, therefore, refrain from criticising adversely the way it is applied in Nicaragua.

In fact, President Zelaya appears to be a man ideally suited for the difficult and onerous task which he has to perform. He has now been in power twelve years. The Conservative Party has in that time made determined efforts to dislodge him; but, thanks to the absolute authority vested in the hands of the Chief Executive, the revolutions have so far proven ineffectual. At the head of the opposition is the family of Chamorro, which has supplied several presidents to the Republic in times past, and is willing to supply more in the future. The Chamorros number three or four able and resourceful men who were, till recently, residents of New Orleans, but who are now understood to make their homes in New York. Although they have had no experience in government employ for many years past, they have figured at the head of a number of revolutionary enterprises, and appear to be still very important factors in the history of Nicaragua.

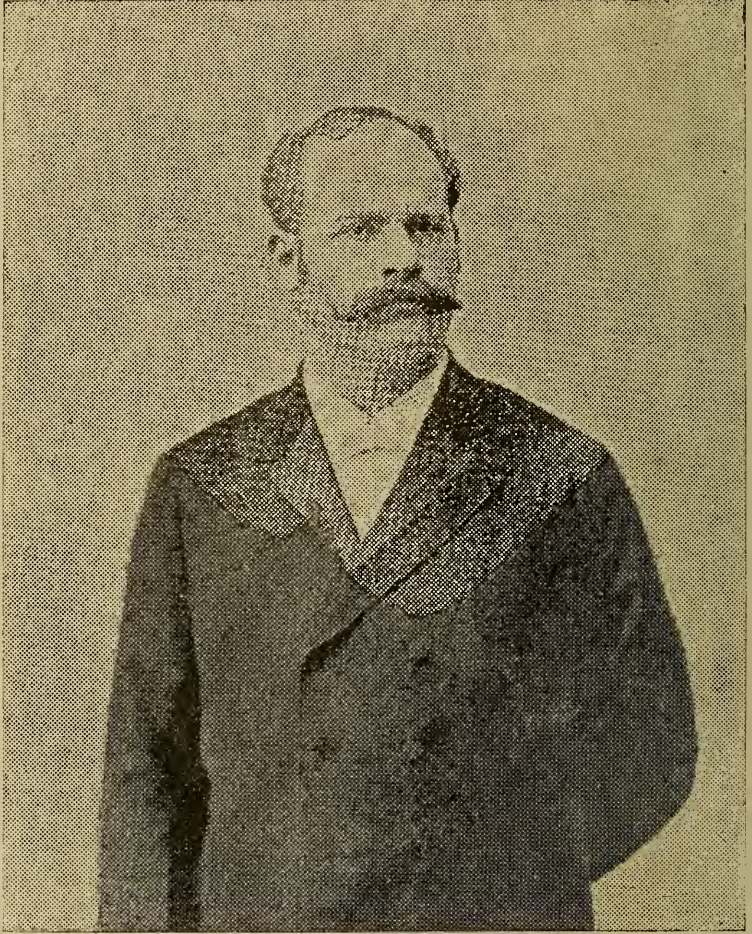
President Zelaya is a man of fine education. He speaks a half-dozen languages fluently. He is a graduate of an English college. He is the busiest man in Nicaragua, and yet one of the most approachable and democratic. He is the Government. The Congress is a pliant tool in his hands. The ministers transact routine affairs, but all business of any importance gets its initiative from the Executive. Zelaya has the reputation of favoring foreigners and giving them every opportunity to invest capital in Nicaragua and develop the resources of the country. It is true, as I have said, that he grants concessions which are practically monopolies. But, as has already been pointed out, it is only by doing so that foreign enterprise can be induced to come to a virgin country. Moreover, these concessions are not granted gratis. An example in point may be cited to make the method of procedure plain. An American by the name of Detrick, who is supposed to represent Senator Clark, of Montana, has secured concessions for mining, stock raising and various agricultural enterprises in the northeastern section of the Republic. In payment for these he is required to make large cash returns annually, to create a navigable stream of the Wanks, and to construct a new town and harbor as a substitute for the port hitherto known as Cape Gracias. It will be thus seen that in exchange for the monopolies that have been granted

Deitrick the Government profits in cash, but still more largely in important public improvements which will not cost the Administration a cent.

A very important concession which has recently been granted to Americans is held by Messrs. Forbes and Woodruff, who will build a large dy-

ing the ore to the coast, in view of the difficult, dangerous and uncertain route down the Wanks and the Prinzapolca Rivers, which is now in use.

Messrs. Forbes and Woodruff are also associated in other important enterprises, of which the most interesting is a concession for the impor-



PRESIDENT J. S. ZELAYA OF NICARAGUA.

namite factory and construct a railroad inland from Prinzapolca, on the Carribbean. The important gold mines in the northeastern section of the Republic promise an important field for the sale of explosives, and the railroad will be of material benefit to the same section, affording a convenient means of bring-

tation of Chinese. The Government has allowed them the exclusive right of bringing coolies to Nicaragua for a term of years. Ten thousand of them will be brought into a state of practical serfdom, their services being let to coffee planters in different parts of the Republic as occasion may require. This amounts to a labor trust

in a sense, but mark how the Government reaps an advantage from this seeming disregard of fundamental economic laws. Not only will the coffee business benefit from the presence of reliable and readily-obtainable labor, but the concessionaires are obligated to pay the Government a per

struction of a wharf at Corinto, on the Pacific coast. The same Company has already acquired extended interests in the interior. It runs the ice plant, the laundry and the electric lighting in Managua, and has lately acquired a ranch forty miles wide and eighty miles long, on which deposits



MRS. ZELAYA.

capita tax in gold as each Celestial arrives in the country.

It would be possible to continue at very considerable length describing the various enterprises which owe their existence to the President's enlightened, progressive policy. For example, the Central American Commercial Company has begun the con-

of salt and lime have already been discovered. Of course, in the prosecution of so many and so varied undertakings, this Company, of itself, has embarked immense sums of money in the development of fields which would otherwise remain virgin. But the Government is by no means conveying valuable fran-

chises to foreigners indiscriminately, nor does it relinquish a certain supervision over them subsequent to parting with them. This fact is well illustrated in the case of the same Company, which, in the last few months, farmed the municipal customs at Bluefields. The concession resulted in the erection of a wharf and warehouse, but the Government, keeping in view the interests and the desire of the local merchants, has recently canceled this concession and purchased the farmership of the customs which it will henceforward administer on its own account. It is true that, in bringing about this change at Bluefields an increase in the customs has been found necessary, and that much discontent exists regarding these extra burdens on the commerce of the port. The point, however, is, that the Government keeps in touch with the popular demands, and seems endeavoring to the best of its faculties to meet their requirements. The retrocession of the wharf concession is a step in the right direction, and it seems probable that as soon as circumstances permit the increased charges on imports at Bluefields will be reduced.

It must be a captious critic indeed who, having any knowledge of the peculiar conditions with which President Zelaya has to contend, will not commend his policy as shown in the instances I have cited. Americans, however, will find it more difficult to understand how an enlightened executive can further his own interests while keeping in view the welfare of his own people. This, however, is a matter of tradition and custom. Every nation has its own peculiarities. Some of our practices would no doubt seem equally strange to a Nicaraguan investigator. President Zelaya's predecessors have followed this course in a brutally selfish manner, but the morality of it has not been criticised. Zelaya's merit is that while he keeps for himself a share in many remunerative concessions, they all benefit the country more than they benefit himself. He was a wealthy man when he went into office. To-day his private fortune is estimated at \$1,000,000 in gold. His wealth is bound to increase rapidly, as his multitudinous interests mature, and none of these promise to be more remunerative than his shares in the railroad from San Ubaldo eastward to Monkey Point.

There is already in existence a railroad from Corinto, on the Pacific, to Managua. Formerly this property was administered by the Government directly. The graft, however, was too good. Everybody was getting rich at the expense of the railroad and the Government. It did not take

Zelaya long to see what was up. He took steps at once to cure the evil. He made a contract with the Nicaragua Government Railroad and Steamship Company to take over the road, the Government to receive a stipulated sum monthly. This arrangement has worked extremely well. The Government has made money and a hitherto unprofitable enterprise is now paying handsomely. The management is in the hands of a German by the name of Wiest, a capable administrator and particularly useful because of the fidelity with which he keeps in view the interests of the Government. Wiest is also charged with the construction of the new road from San Ubaldo, on Lake Nicaragua, to the Caribbean, and when this line is finished his concession will apply to it equally with the Pacific road. The enterprise is particularly interesting, not only for the fact that the President does not find it inconsistent to retain an interest in it, but because it signals the definite abandonment of any hope of the construction of the Nicaragua Canal. The railroad is Zelaya's alternative. If he cannot have the canal he will connect the Atlantic and the Pacific by rail. He is sufficiently a statesman to see that he gains thereby for his country practically all the advantages that might have accrued from the canal.

It is interesting to observe in passing that the Government retains control of the telegraph and telephone systems throughout the country. The reason for this is immediately apparent. The Government is practically in a state of siege at all times. It must be prepared at any moment to deal effectively with rebellion. The control of the media of communication is one of the most effectual means to this end. But here again the President's statesmanlike knack of joining the immediately necessary military course of action with that which makes for the general welfare of the people of the Republic asserts itself. The telegraph and telephone are accessible to everybody in times of peace. Telephones cost about a dollar and a half a month. Long-distance connection is about 5 cents extra per call. The telegraph rates are equally low. Both are extensively patronized. They extend to all the large towns and the service is excellent. In times of war these conditions are subject to modification; but under Zelaya's patriotic regime times of war are growing less frequent and a great deal shorter when they do occur.

The Government, in the last analysis, owes its existence to the Army. Zelaya came into power as the result of a revolution which defeated the

Conservative Party that had, for thirty years, monopolized the Government. There are no issues on which the parties divide except the actual possession of power. Politics simply mean the struggles of the "outs" to get "in." That is to say, the control of the Army is the key to the situation. So long as Zelaya controls the forces he will probably continue at the head of affairs. The Nicaraguan Army is a very interesting, not to say instructive, institution. But it would be a decided mistake to conclude that it cannot fight and fight hard. Military service is universal. The names of citizens are drawn quarterly. Those who can afford to pay a fine, the amount of which is proportioned to their resources, in this way avoid military service, but the conscription is rig-

\$55 American), considered a very desirable income. The soldiers are uniformed in red trousers and blue jumpers of the cheapest material. They bear a certain family resemblance to the familiar monkey on the New Orleans hand-organ. But they make very good soldiers in spite of that. In times of war the Government "recruits" in a way of its own. A sufficient force of soldiers and police will surround a theatre, raid the pit, and march the spectators off to the scene of hostilities. Or, some afternoon when the park is full of idlers and pleasure-seekers, the military drag net descends and the Army is suddenly augmented by some hundred "volunteers."

But the Army gets its pay regularly every evening, and it is loyal to the master that feeds it. This



Residence of the President of Nicaragua, Managua.

ously enforced everywhere else. The lower grades of commissioned officers are recruited in the same way, or promoted from the ranks as a reward for service or capacity. It strikes one as queer to find a lieutenant in the Army working as a lamp trimmer in the Capital, or following some other equally obscure position in this land of curious contrasts. The higher officers are generally in the Government employ. A chief of police is likely to be a colonel at least. A minister is almost invariably a general. The private soldier receives 50 cents a day in Nicaraguan currency, which is now worth in American money about one-sixth of its face value. Out of this he must procure his food and support his family, if he has one. This can be done in a land where a square meal is purchasable for 5 cents in the native currency. The officers are better paid. A brigadier general will get about \$400 a month (about

principle of good pay is one which accounts for much of Zelaya's success. He looks out for his friends. His supporters get good jobs and opportunities to invest their savings where they will do the most good.

The most remarkable recent incident in which President Zelaya has figured is one regarding which there must necessarily be a diversity of opinion. In decreeing that the clergy should no longer wear in the streets a distinctive garb, the Government manifested a hostility to the Catholic Church which has invited some criticism. The priests refused almost unanimously to obey the law, and were obliged to leave the country. But, obviously, it was impossible to deprive a population, largely Catholic, of its spiritual leaders, and recently a number of the exiles have returned to the country, subscribing to the conditions under which their presence is tolerated. It may be frankly said that the Government is

free-thinking rather than religious. In fact, the Church is supported by the women of the Republic rather than the men. It will be readily seen that this latent spirit of hostility to the Church, however developed, would be liable to express itself harshly if a good pretext could be found. Unfortunately, the Church is supposed to favor the Conservative Party, and, under a Liberal regime, has had to pay the penalty of this alleged political affiliation. The outcome of the movement against the Church in Nicaragua cannot be guessed at present, but is bound to be important and, perhaps, momentous.

But, in the main, President Zelaya, then, is giving Nicaragua what it needs—a strong, stable government. He has in him something of Diaz, just as Diaz has in him something of Napoleon. Both of them are typical Latin American statesmen. They differ in ideals and methods from us, but they have this aim in common—the creation of a prosperous and peaceful country. Zelaya's financial policy is wisely

adapted to this end. He is meeting the payments on the national debt promptly and in full. The need for the money to make these payments is probably the reason why he has granted so many concessions, but the better reputation of Nicaragua among the nations would seem to justify even more radical methods. How long can he keep control? Can he carry out his plans uninterrupted by his opponents? Probably as long as he remains on the scene, no successful effort will be made to oust him from power, but his death in the next few years would most likely precipitate civil war.

The interests of the United States are not sufficiently important as yet to justify intervention in the case of renewed internal dissensions. It is, therefore, greatly to be hoped that the present Executive will survive for many years to consolidate the policies he has so vigorously initiated, and to round out a remarkable career fraught with many important achievements for the benefit of his native land.



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